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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1437
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
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SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/FO, SCA/A, S/CT
CENTCOM FOR CG CFC-A, CG CJTF-76, POLAD
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
REL NATO/AU/NZ/ISAF

SIPDIS, SENSITIVE

E.O.: 12958 N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [KCOR](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: PRT FARAH FARAH CITY MAYOR SACKED OVER
CORRUPTION ALLEGATIONS

REF: A) 2005 PRT WEEKLY - DECEMBER 10 B) KABUL 3090

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On July 10, Farah business representatives joined members of the Provincial Council and visiting Parliamentarians demanding Deputy Governor Juma Ghanghor dismiss Mayor of Farah City, Besmellah Khan, amid constant allegations of corruption. Local merchants also protested against Khan, closing almost all stores throughout the day. Ghanghor responded by sacking the mayor. He then appointed Mohammed Hashim as interim mayor to oversee the Deputy Mayor. This is the first time citizens of Farah have used peaceful demonstration as a mechanism for political change. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) On July 10, representatives of Farahs business community approached the Provincial Council during a meeting with visiting Parliament members Nafas Gul Khetmet and Manur Mussa demanding the dismissal of Mayor of Farah City Besmellah Khan. They claim to have repeatedly discussed allegations of corruption with Governor Issatullah Wasifi to no avail. They blame Wasifis lack of action on his strong friendship with Khan, and their joint corruption activities. Wasifi left the province approximately one month ago and told EmbOff he will return approximately July 15.

Allegations of Corruption

¶3. (SBU) Allegations of corruption against Khan include collection of funds from Farahs businessmen as taxes since their stores are on public land. Khan allegedly pockets 50 percent and gives the other half to Wasifi. Provincial Council member Belquis Roshan charged that Khan sold government land at exorbitant prices and again shared the proceeds with the Governor. Choice parcels of land worth around 3,000 Afghani (AFs) are often sold for between 50-60,000 AFs.

¶4. (SBU) The District Attorneys (DA) office recently dismissed allegations against Khan including a secret relationship with members of the Iranian government and

the Taliban. Khan allegedly provided information to the GoI and/or the Taliban in return for payment. The DAs office was unable to prove the case. A widespread and oft repeated allegation was he drained the official coffers for personal use - specifically embezzling funds earmarked for road maintenance. (Note: See PRT weekly report of Dec 10, 2005 when Khan told PRTOff he misplaced approximately 300,000USD, would not initiate an investigation into the missing funds, and requested funding for industrial construction equipment including a bulldozer and land-grading equipment for Farah City. End note.)

15. (SBU) Other nefarious activity may include Khans involvement with the abduction of Director of Customs Abdul Ghani Turabi. Turabi was appointed Director of Customs five months ago. Since then he has increased customs revenues from a monthly average of five million AFs to 32 million AFs in June. Turabi was seen in a heated argument with Khan just hours before the abduction.

Iranian Implications

16. (SBU) Not all Provincial Council members agreed to request Khans removal. Provincial Council member Hangama Sadeet wanted to retain Khan as the mayor at least until Iranian engineers complete their site assessments for four development projects (vocational school, clinic, road and electric importation) scheduled

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to commence shortly (ref B). She told PRTOff that Khan was instrumental in facilitating the Iranian expansion; without him Farah might lose contracts and projects.

No Immediate Arrest Expected

17. (SBU) District Attorney Abdul Kadus called for Khans arrest pending investigation, but the Deputy Governor intervened, stating Khan was considered under guarantee by Governor Wasifi and would remain free on his own recognizance. Ghanghor told PRTOff he wanted to wait for the return of Governor Wasifi, but when the large, angry group descended upon his office, he felt compelled to act. He did stand up to the crowd when they also asked him to dismiss Dr. Qasim Bayan, Farahs Director of Health, for corruption and poor performance.

8.(SBU) Comment: Passive protest has not been used before in Farah, to the best of PRTOffs knowledge. Prior demonstrations took the form of marches punctuated by loud speeches and threats of violence. Credit may go to Provincial Council member Sadeet, who calmed the mob that was threatening to take action. With such obvious ties to Iran, it was surprising no one considered Khan a flight risk. He was in Mashad and Birjand, Iran, late Dec, 2005 and was a member of the delegation that traveled across the border July 2 to finalize details. Strangely, there is no indication the scandal will spill over to the Governor. No one suggested his removal or sanctioning despite his being jointly implicated in many corruption schemes. Another complicating factor is the sad fact Farah Province has only two defense lawyers. As cases cannot come to trial without a defense lawyer the case may take years or never come to court. End Comment.